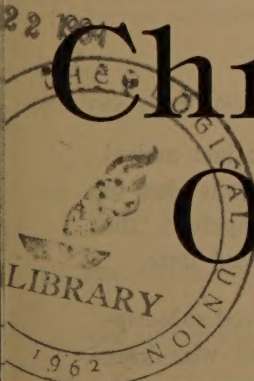


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Christian Order

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THE EDITOR

offers sincere apologies for the late arrival of the March number. This was due to causes beyond his control. Hopefully, the April number will arrive in good time.

There are still a few who received subscription-reminders for January and who have not yet replied. It would be the very greatest help if they would do so without delay.

My thanks to so many who have renewed so promptly and generously. I am very, very grateful to them.

—*Paul Crane, S J.*

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Christian Order

EDITED BY

Paul Crane SJ

VOLUME 25

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Enough is Enough

THE EDITOR

CATHOLICS of the contemporary generation in the western world are submitted, to a greater extent than their forbears, to the relentless pressure of "values" at all points in their daily lives which are to a greater or lesser extent opposed to everything they have been taught to believe in

Such pressure is hard to resist, the more so when it is exercised—unwittingly and without any obvious desire to seduce—by those who can be described accurately enough as extremely nice people, apparently without a care in the world; quite indifferent, as it seems, to their own salvation. The transcendental is without significance in their lives. They appear as without any sense of their obligation to God. What matters in their lives is the here and now. The rest can be taken care of—if, indeed, it needs to be taken care of at all—when the time comes. This attitude pervades the post-Christian western world. The pull it exercises today over the bewildered Catholic minority of the rising generation is immensely strong. Many drift away from their Faith and into its embrace.

They are the more likely to do so nowadays by reason of the confusion that besets them. So many Catholics, in fact, do not know what their Faith is and what it stands for. They can hardly be blamed for this in view of the

religious instruction—or what passes for religious instruction—they have received at school and continue to receive from the pulpit, at university chaplaincies or, when available on the side, at other institutes of higher learning, such as polytechnics, teachers training colleges and so on. The impression received is that it is, on the whole, universally bad. Given, then, the present poor presentation of religious instruction, one is entitled to ask what defences the Catholic has against the pervasive pressure of the contemporary world. So far as I can see, scarcely any.

Small wonder, then, that many young Catholics fall victim to its enticements; simply slip away from their Faith and take the easy way out from that which has come to mean nothing to them. This would appear to have been the case with those Catholic undergraduates at Cambridge who were found some months ago to be so lax when it came to attendance at Mass. What surprised me at the time was not their laxity in this regard, given the poverty of religious instruction to which they had been submitted. What surprised me was the surprise of teaching religious at this state of affairs. They seemed in the letters they wrote to the Catholic Press at the time almost totally unaware of what appeared as their total inadequacy to meet the need for true religious instruction of those they taught at school.

It is high time that the teaching Religious Orders and Congregations pulled themselves together, asked themselves what they are doing in this regard, then decided — at no matter what cost to themselves — to give top priority in their schools to the teaching of the Catholic Religion, whole and entire in its richness and its beauty—devoid entirely of progressive frills. This, presumably, is why the teaching Orders were founded in the first place. The time has come to remind them in no uncertain terms that they should be faithful to their bond. Many Catholic parents will tell you with truth that they have had enough. I agree with them.

Michael Davies in this second article of his series on Modernism, lays down certain vital definitions; then proceeds to an examination of the way in which Protestantism and Atheism prepared the way for the first Modernist thrust against the Church and from within.

Partisans of Error

THE MODERNIST HERESY: 2

MICHAEL DAVIES

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

I HAVE explained that we know that a truth (dogma) is divinely revealed because it is proposed to us as such by the Church speaking in the name of Christ. But we can go even further. In her most profound reality the Catholic Church is Christ Himself. Our Lord has perpetuated His Incarnation by remaining in the world throughout the nations and the centuries in the Church which is His Mystical Body. The Church is Christ among us today, preaching the Gospel, worshipping the Trinity, and sanctifying us through the Sacraments. This is why it is correct to state that there is no salvation outside the Church, because there is no salvation except through Christ.

Christ is the Head of the Mystical Body, the Holy Ghost the Soul, and we are the members. In his Encyclical Letter, *The Mystical Body of Christ*, Pope Pius XII remarked that Our Lord has chosen to save mankind with the co-operation of Our Lady. Pope Pius made it clear that Our Lord requires our co-operation not through necessity but through choice:

Our Saviour wants to be helped by the members of His Mystical Body in carrying out the work of Redemption. This is not due to any need or insufficiency in Him, but rather because He has so ordained it for the greater honour of His immaculate Bride. Dying on the

Cross, He bestowed upon His Church the boundless treasure of the Redemption without any co-operation on her part; but in the distribution of that treasure He not only shares this work of sanctification with His spotless Bride, but wills it to arise in a certain manner out of her labour.

Because the Catholic Church is Christ Himself continuing the mission entrusted to Him by the Father, the mission of the Church is identical with His. Pope Leo XIII teaches us this in his Encyclical *Satis cognitum* (29 June 1896). He explained that the mandate entrusted by Christ to His Church is "the same mandate which He had received from the Father." The one mission of Christ and of His Church is, the Pope tells us: "to save that which has perished, that is to say, not some nations or peoples, but the whole human race without distinction of time and place."

Because the Church is a body she is visible. She is united by visible bonds. The first of these is a visible government; Pope Leo XIII explained in his Encyclical *Annum ingressi sumus* (15 March 1902):

Christianity is, in fact, incarnate in the Catholic Church; it is to be identified with that perfect and spiritual Society, sovereign in its sphere, which is the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, and has for its visible head the Roman Pontiff, successor of the Prince of the Apostles. She is the continuator of the Saviour's mission, the daughter of the redemption and its heir; she has spread the Gospel and defended it with her life's blood; and, strong in the divine assistance and the immortality which have been promised her, she never compromises with error, she remains faithful to the mandate which she has received to bear the teaching of Jesus Christ to the world, and to keep it inviolable in its integrity to the end of time.

The second bond by which the Church is visibly united is that of unity in the faith. This unity, to quote *Satis cognitum* again,

... should be so closely knit and so perfect amongst His followers that it might in some measure shadow forth the union between Himself and His Father: "I

pray that they may all be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee."

Agreement and union of mind is the necessary foundation of this perfect concord among men, from which concurrence of will and similarity of actions are the natural results. Wherefore, in His divine wisdom, He ordained in his Church *unity of faith*: a virtue which is the first of those bonds which united man to God, and whence we receive the name of the "faithful—one Lord, one faith, one baptism." . . . Christ instituted in the Church a living, authoritative and permanent Magisterium, which by His own power He strengthened, by the Spirit of Truth He taught, and by miracles confirmed. He willed and ordered, under the gravest penalties, that its teachings should be received as if they were His own.

The Deposit of Faith

In his Encyclical *Satis cognitum*, Pope Leo XIII stressed not only that unity of faith is an essential prerequisite for membership of the one, visible Church founded by Our Lord, but that the entire Deposit of Faith must be accepted. By the Deposit of Faith we mean the "stock" or "treasure" of faith entrusted to the Church which she must faithfully preserve and infallibly expound. This original deposit is subject to development as the centuries progress, but always under the guidance of the Magisterium, and it must always remain consistent with the previous stage of development. Thus the doctrine of the Trinity as defined by the Councils of Nicea (325) and Chalcedon (451) cannot be found spelled out so exactly in the New Testament, but the doctrine of those Councils is compatible with the New Testament, and a legitimate development of its teaching. The Protestant who claims that a developed Catholic teaching is incompatible with the Gospel is like a man who looks at a mighty oak tree and denies that it can have developed from an acorn. Pope Leo XIII explains:

All those things are to be believed by divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the written or unwritten word of God, and which are proposed by the Church as divinely revealed, either by solemn defi-

nition or in the exercise of its Ordinary and Universal Magisterium.

Quoting St. Augustine and 2 Corinthians, he rejects as totally unacceptable the possibility that membership of the Church is compatible with the rejection of even one doctrine proposed to us by the Magisterium as divinely revealed:

He who dissents even in one point from divinely revealed truth absolutely rejects all faith, since he thereby refuses to honour God as the supreme truth and the formal motive of faith. "In many things they are with me, in a few things they are not with me; but in those few things in which they are not with me the many things in which they are with me will not profit them." And this indeed deservedly; for they who take from Christian doctrine what they please lean on their own judgements, not on faith; and not "bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ," they more truly obey themselves than God. "You, who believe what you like, believe yourselves rather than the Gospel."

Cardinal Newman expressed the same point in very blunt terms: "You must accept the whole or reject the whole." (*The Development of Christian Doctrine*, London, 1878, p. 94.)

The literal meaning of the word heretic is "one who chooses."

The Magisterium

The word "Magisterium", derived from the Latin *magister*, a teacher, refers to the living Authority in the Church. When the Magisterium teaches the entire Church definitively on a matter involving faith or morals we must hear and accept that teaching as if it came from our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as, indeed, it does. The voice of the Magisterium is the voice of Christ teaching us today. The Magisterium is represented by the Pope himself when he teaches in his capacity as Vicar of Christ. The Pope does not teach as a delegate of the universal episcopate, and his teaching does not derive its authority from their consent or the consent of the faithful at large. The voice

of the Magisterium is also represented by the universal episcopate, when all the bishops of the world are united on a point of doctrine among themselves and with the Bishop of Rome.

The Magisterium can be exercised in two ways, ordinarily and extraordinarily. The Ordinary Magisterium is the day to day teaching of the Pope and the bishops united to him. This teaching is binding in different degrees, depending largely on the subject matter, the manner of its promulgation, and the extent to which it is a reiteration of previous pronouncements of the Magisterium. Teaching on faith and morals can obtain infallible status from being consistently taught by the Ordinary Magisterium.

A pronouncement of the Extraordinary Magisterium is usually made to settle once and for all a matter that has been the subject of controversy. The Extraordinary Magisterium is invoked when either the Pope alone, or the Pope in union with the Fathers of a General Council, or with all the bishops of the Church even when not convoked in a General Council, invokes the assistance of the Holy Ghost in proclaiming as divinely revealed a certain proposition to which the entire Church is required to give the absolute assent of faith.

Satan at Work

Just as Satan, the Prince of this World, did all that lay in his power to obstruct the mission of Our Lord during His physical presence upon earth, so he has strenuously attempted to nullify the mission of the Mystical Body of Christ. The Church is composed of two elements, the human and the divine. The Church itself is without spot or wrinkle, it is perfect, but the individual members of the Church have no such perfection. Our intellects and wills have been weakened by original sin: though we wish to do what is right our inclination is to do what is wrong. The problem confronting a Christian is how to be in the world but not of the world; he is simply only a sojourner here, his true home is in heaven and his eyes should ever be fixed upon his heavenly destiny, but frequently, almost invariably, they are not. And living in the world the Christian is influenced by the world. The temptation is

always present to adapt his views to its views, his standards to its standards. In his *Popular History of the Catholic Church*, first published in 1939, Monsignor Philip Hughes, perhaps the most scholarly and objective Catholic historian of this century, noted that as early as the second century a pattern had been established which has been with us ever since:

We are seeing the appearance of types that will never cease to reappear throughout two thousand years: Catholics who propose to explain Catholicism by synthesis with the intellectual life of the time, Catholics who look back from the difficulties of the moment to the happy time of a far-off golden age of primitive faith, Catholics who turn from an official teaching that does not encourage their personal liking to an alleged private inspiration that sets them apart from the ordinary discipline. In one sense Church History is a web where threads such as these do but cross and recross (pp. 9-10).

Rationalism

The predominant influence upon intellectual life at the end of the nineteenth century, particularly in Germany, was rationalism. Catholics could not hope to remain unaffected, especially those involved in academic life. Writing of the situation in Germany, Cardinal Manning explained:

It is to be remembered that in the mixed universities the Catholic and Protestant populations were confounded together, and that the government appointed Protestant professors, at whose lectures Catholics attended. Infection cannot be circumscribed, nor diseases kept within a ringfence. The same habits of mind are found to pervade men of the same nation, and among Catholic philosophers unsound theories had begun to appear. Pius the Ninth, during his pontificate, had been compelled to condemn three or four philosophies which were being taught by Catholic professors.*

I mentioned on page 1 that Modernism is fatal not simply to Christianity but to any religion postulating

* *The True Story of the Vatican Council*, pp. 127-8.

belief in a transcendent God. Before beginning a detailed examination of the history of Modernism it is important that the reader should have a clear understanding of the terms "transcendence" and "immanence."

Transcendence and Immanence

When we state that God is transcendent we mean that He exists independently of the universe. If the material universe ceased to exist God would still be there. He is the Creator of the universe. He existed before time began. He not only created every thing that exists, spiritual, material, visible and invisible. He keeps it in existence. How beautiful how sublime is the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. Let Newman express its sublimity for us, and let those of us who have been given the grace to accept the truth of this doctrine thank God for His goodness to us. Let us pray that those who are unable to believe it will accept the grace which God certainly offers, so that they too can receive the gift of faith.

The Son was from eternity in the bosom of the Father, as His dearly-beloved and Only-begotten. He loved him before the foundation of the world. He had glory with Him before the world was. He was in the Father, and the Father in Him. None knew the Son but the Father, nor the Father but the Son. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He was "the Brightness of God's glory and the express Image of His Person"; and in this unspeakable Unity of Father and Son, was the Spirit also, as being the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of the Son; the Spirit of Both at once, not separate from them, yet distinct, so that they were Three Persons, One God, from everlasting.

Thus was it, we are told, from everlasting;— before the heavens and the earth were made, before man fell or Angels rebelled, before the sons of God were formed in the morning of creation, yea, before there were Seraphim to veil their faces before Him and cry "Holy," He existed without ministers, without attendants, without court and kingdom, without manifested glory, without any thing but Himself; He His own Temple, His own infinite rest, His own supreme bliss,

from eternity. O wonderful mystery! O the depth of His majesty! O deep things which the Spirit only knoweth! Wonderful and strange to creatures who grovel on this earth, as we, that He, the All-powerful, the All-wise, the All-good, the All-glorious, should for an eternity, for years without end, or rather, apart from time, which is but one of His creatures, that He should have dwelt without those through whom He might be powerful, in whom He might be wise, towards whom He might be good, by whom He might be glorified. O wonderful, that all His deep and infinite attributes should have been without manifestation!

How sad, how drab, how devoid of joy and inspiration are the various theories of pantheism and immanentism when we contrast them with our belief in a transcendent God. Pantheism is a belief which identifies God with the universe, with material creation. He is envisaged as some sort of motivating force which exists within the material universe ("informs" it, to use the technical term). But this immanent God has no existence independently of the material universe. St. Pius X rightly asked, in his Encyclical *Pascendi* (8 September 1907):

"Does or does not this *immanence* leave God distinct from man?" His answer was: "The doctrine of *immanence* in the Modernist acceptation holds and professes that every phenomenon of conscience proceeds from man as man. The rigorous conclusion from this is the identity of man with God, which means Pantheism" (p. 50).

Obviously, as Catholics we believe that God is immanent as well as transcendent. He *is* everywhere. He does "inform" the universe, but He is not identified with the universe. The distinction between a transcendent God and a God who is *only* immanent can be simplified, oversimplified perhaps, by distinguishing between a God "out there" and a God "in here" — a F.I.F. as Monsignor Ronald Knox explained it, a Funny Interior Feeling. G. K. Chesterton was as unimpressed as Msgr. Knox by those whose God was no more than a Funny Interior

* H. J. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, Vol. VI (edition London, 1881), pp. 364-5.

* The quotations from *Pascendi* used in this study are taken from the official translation published by Burns and Oates in London in 1908.

Feeling. He was not even disposed to be polite to those who worshipped "the god within". Here is what he wrote about them in his book *Orthodoxy*:

Of all conceivable forms of enlightenment the worst is what these people call the Inner Light. Of all horrible religions the most horrible is the worship of the god within. Any one who knows anybody knows how it would work; anyone who knows anyone from the Higher Thought Centre knows how it does work. That Jones shall worship the god within him turns ultimately to mean that Jones shall worship Jones. Let Jones worship the sun or moon, anything rather than the Inner Light: let Jones worship cats or crocodiles, if he can find any in his street, but not the god within. Christianity came into world firstly in order to assert with violence that a man had not only to look inwards, but to look outwards, to behold with astonishment and enthusiasm a divine company and a divine captain. The only fun of being a Christian was that a man was not left alone with the Inner Light, but definitely recognized an outer light, fair as the sun, clear as the moon, terrible as an army with banners (London, 1908, p. 136).

From Protestantism to Atheism

I have already referred to the fact that rationalism was the inevitable outcome of Protestantism. St. Pius X stated this explicitly in his Encyclical *Pascendi*. He warned "by how many roads Modernism leads to atheism and to the annihilation of all religion. The error of Protestantism made the first step on this path; that of Modernism makes the second; Atheism makes the next" (p. 51). There have been and are many conservative Protestants as opposed to Modernism as was St. Pius X. The Protestant theologian Karl Barth, who died in 1968, was among the most effective of all the opponents of Modernism, and the transcendence of God was the foundation of his theology. God is "wholly other" was the way he expressed it. Nor did the sixteenth century Protestant Reformers envisage the direction their break with Rome would ultimately take when they replaced the authority of the living Magisterium of the Church with the Bible. They claimed to be appealing from the authority of the Church to the auth-

ority of the inspired Scriptures. But who is to interpret the Scriptures if there is no infallible teacher? The Reformers would have been horrified by the claim of Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976), perhaps the most notorious of all Liberal-Protestants, that: "The Resurrection is not itself a fact of history. Such an impossible marvel could only spring from mythology". But the process which led Bultman to deny the Resurrection was the same process which had led the Protestant Reformers to deny the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Bultman and the Reformers behaved in an identical manner, making their own reason the ultimate authority for interpreting the Scriptures. What right would the Reformers have had to deny to Bultman what they accorded to themselves? As I have already pointed out, the inherent weakness of Protestantism is that the individual believer has no guarantee that anything in the Bible is certainly true beyond his personal conviction that it is. Some, like Karl Barth, believe and teach much that is true. Others, like Bultman, "explain away the whole Gospel", as Cardinal Heenan expressed it. "Incarnation, the virgin birth, the Trinity and, of course, the resurrection are all myths. It is as absurd to talk of God on earth as God in heaven . . . God does not exist outside this world."*

PARTISANS OF ERROR

by

Michael Davies

Now being serialised in *Christian Order* is obtainable from the Holy Cross Bookshop, 4 Brownhill Road, Catford, London SE 6 2EJ at £3.50 (post free). Also available, St. Pius X's encyclical against the Modernists, *Pascendi* at £1.50 (post free). The two together at £4.20 (post free).

Text of a lecture delivered in Dublin and
Cork by Father Paul Crane, S.J. on February
22nd and 23rd of this year, 1984.

CURRENT COMMENT

The Rejection of Belief

THE EDITOR

FAITH is a gift; “a supernatural gift of God whereby we believe without doubting whatever God has revealed”—if I may make so bold as to quote from that wonderful little compendium, which it is the fashion amongst contemporary Progressives these days to regard with something not far removed from avuncular disdain. I refer, of course, to the *Penny Cathecism*, as those of us who had it “thrust down our throats” in our youngest years, still recall it with affection.

No Reason for Doubt

“Whereby we believe without doubting whatever God has revealed”. And why not, for Heaven’s sake? For the revealer is Christ, Who was God and God being by nature fullness of being, perfection and truth itself, there can be no reason why any man in his senses should take it upon himself to doubt God’s word. None whatsoever. To take what God says and to believe in it is, when you come to think of it, the most sensible and reasonable thing that a rational human being can do. Yet, by a strange twist of fortune’s wheel, it is the believer these days—the man or woman who lives by Faith, who believes on the word of God revealing—who is regarded with pitying condescension by the contemporary secularist establishment, whether inside the Catholic Church or out of it; which latter seems to me, at least, a far more honest position. And it is this very establishment that demands an assent to its own privately conceived beliefs as strong as that which it holds in disdain when accorded to the truths of God.

Setting Themselves Above God

Could anything be more outrageous than that? From the heights of their professorial chairs, in their clever or supposedly learned articles, in their common-room chat they throw doubts on God's word; as they do so, demanding an assent to their own propositions of an order that they would never accord to the word of God Himself. Which means, by implication, that they set themselves above God. Which makes them not merely walking contradictions, but living absurdities. I sometimes think that, if one were walking down the street and met one of these people — names are on the tip of my tongue, but I am in a charitable mood and will hold on to it, not let it loose — and he looked up at me with that slightly unbalanced, somewhat daft look that some of them affect; and then said "Follow me", my first inclination would be to scarper as quickly as I could; my second, if the panic wore off in time, to dial 999 as quickly as possible, asking police and ambulancemen to come right away, for I had a lunatic on my hands. That is what the unfortunate fellow would be and, in fact, is — a lunatic. We have heard stories of people going around thinking and, indeed, saying that they are Napoleon, Hitler, Queen Boadicea or Robert the Bruce. As a rule, they can be dealt with. But for someone—even by implication—to say that he is God is very different. Here we reach a much higher plane of absurdity. Something very dangerous. And it is a sobering thought that there are a fair number of them in the Church, very often holding higher teaching posts; in their utterances making themselves like God, because demanding that we should give to their critique of God's word an assent which they themselves refuse to give to His revealed truth. Thereby, they set themselves over and above God. It is quite reasonable, I would suggest, to describe a human being who does that as a lunatic.

Lunatics in Charge

As I have said already, it is a thought not merely sobering but devastating when one realises that many of these would-be gods and goddesses occupy teaching and catechetical posts—some of them very high—in the educational, catechetical and pastoral establishments of the Church, not merely at diocesan and national, but at inter-

national level; to say nothing of seminaries and houses of formation and study of religious orders. They are found at the nerve-centres in all their would-be pomp and tarnished glory. And what are they? Lunatics, each one; because by definition, would-be Gods. The thing is fantastic. We have reached the point in some areas of the contemporary Church, where we can say truthfully that the lunatics are now in charge; where dissent and disbelief are the rule and true belief the exception. I would submit that the United States is probably a case in point, though the Holy Father's recent appointments to the archdiocesan sees of Boston and New York would appear, at first sight, to offer firm ground for hope.

Belief a Precious Gift

Let us turn now to look at the causes of disbelief and let us remember, as we do so, that Faith or Belief is a most precious gift. It is precious on two counts. In the first place, by reason of its own intrinsic worth: in itself, it is priceless. And why? Because, at Baptism, the believer is gifted with the Holy Spirit, the Uncreated Grace, the source of that New Life of Love whereby we are enabled, when this life is done, to know and love God direct in that loving union of indescribable intimacy with Him in Heaven. At Baptism the believer is made capable of this union which is totally out of the reach of his natural powers. This by way of supernatural—more than natural—consummation. Meanwhile, on the way during our life here on earth, we are enabled, by reason of that same indwelling, to put God's interests first (which means holding steadily to His law in our regard) and to love others for His sake, which means not only as His created beings; but as brothers and sisters in Christ to whom we give ourselves the more fully and the more richly because the giving is done in the light of His love.

When you come to think of what all this means quietly and prayerfully, you will realise that there can be no greater gift than this, not merely by reason of what it means in this life, which is true richness, but by reason of its consummation, which is union in love with God. Also, as in every gift, there is the second reason that makes it precious, apart from its intrinsic worth, a second count to

be taken into consideration; and that is the person of the Giver, Who is God Himself, Who pours out His love on each one of us totally dependent on Him. Can there ever have been such an outpouring? Can there ever have been such a gift? God, who has given us life itself, gives us with His Grace the key to everything that makes life worth living, hoping for nothing in return, simply pouring Himself out on each of us in love.

Why the Drift from the Faith?

Why, then, today are so many losing the Faith—as the expression goes—drifting away from it? I have called this lecture “The Rejection of Belief”. I think that this is a bit too strong. The phrase implies a positive act and, as such, is too strong for what is, in fact, happening. I would describe the present process more accurately as “The Loss of Belief”, implying a drifting away rather than a positive act of rejection. Why, then, the drift? Elsewhere I have attributed it not only to the confused attempts at renewal with which the Church has been saddled since Vatican II, but to what seems to me to be the wrong emphasis placed on what might be called the “Apologetics” aspect of Religious Instruction in the years that preceded the Council. Stress was laid in those days on the defence of the Faith, but very little was heard of the riches brought by the Grace of God to the life of the individual Catholic. Instead, the approach was too often negative and severe. Do not mistake me. I am no advocate of permissiveness. Neither have I any time for those who present to the young a picture of the Christian life as a weary trudge over rough ground through what seems to be a never-ending arch of “don’ts”. Obedience to the commandments was rightly stressed; but the young were rapidly told *why* they should be kept or what difference would be made to their own lives if they kept them; that true fulfilment would be brought by way of bye-product to the lives of those who held to God’s law out of a love for God that was positive and rich. It seemed to many on the receiving end of this somewhat straight-laced religious instruction that the Faith had nothing to offer them personally; but that it let you in on something that happened after death, if you were “right with God” when you went. A kind of insurance policy and

not much more. Meanwhile, there was life to be lived and religious instruction appeared as having little positive to say about that. What it told you was what you must not do. Catholics, it appeared, had no fun. The neo-pagans seemed to have all the breaks.

Baby with the Bath Water

It could well be that this has been recognised since Vatican II. Efforts have been made to improve things; but, in the process of so doing, the baby, I am afraid has been emptied out with the bath water. Here you have had—and continue to have—at work within the contemporary Church that pervasive non-modernist influence which would suit doctrine to the mood of the moment in an endeavour to capture the drifting mass of the young. The Church's task is thought of by the self-appointed, neo-modernist prophets of the day as that of blessing what is rather than saying what should be. Self-fulfilment directly sought is defined as the Christian goal.

Fulfilment a Bye-Product

It is necessary to say at once that it cannot be and this by reason of man's *total* dependence on God, which places him under obligation to serve Him. And how? Through the *fulfilment* of God's Law in man's regard, which brings by way of bye-product—and *only by way of bye-product*—as is always the case, those three wonderful things, which each one of us wants with all his heart and in the possession of which true human fulfilment alone is found to consist. These are that inner tranquility, which comes to those who take God's law as their lodestar and act accordingly; then happiness, which the great Aquinas defined so marvellously as "the state made perfect by the possession of all good things", taking all to yourself through constant appreciation of them for what they are, the lovely work of God's hands at which one never grabs; and, finally, joy, *quies in bono possesso*—the quiet steady resting in the attainment of your heart's desire. These things we were rarely told in our young days. The positive side of God's Law was rarely explained to us. Instead, once again, so many negatives. Which left us with a longing for something more—something which we were not given.

The Urge for Fulfilment

The urge for fulfilment was there. It was neither met nor satisfied by the pre-conciliar negatives too many of us were given as staple diet. The post-conciliar progressive take-over of key catechetical and other allied teaching posts within the Church sought not to present positively the richness of what was. This was its great betrayal. Instead, under neo-modernist influence, it pointed to another "richness", that of self-fulfilment sought directly for itself alone; which meant a discarding or, better, letting slip, of law and authority within the Church and the dogmatic and moral precepts underlying both. Christianity—the Faith as these new prophets of a "new Church" presented it—meant no more and no less than "doing your own thing" in your own way and on your own terms, with the Church blessing what you did. God's Law had to be bent in the interests of self-fulfilment. The last thing man had to do was to *bend* to God's Law; which would prevent him from fulfilling himself on his own terms and under the guidance of his own self-made law; which they called conscience. Fulfilment was seen as the *rejection of dependence*. In reality, it is achieved only through its admission. This is what Adam failed to see. The same applies to the progressive prophets of today. They are, in fact, true reactionaries. Back with poor Adam in the Garden of Eden, munching away at the forbidden fruit.

What was the nature of Adam's temptation? To break God's one command where he was concerned and stand, by so doing, on the level with God; finding freedom in the rejection of dependence. On the contrary, as already said, the opposite is true. Freedom comes only with the admission of dependence. The distinction that must be made is that between freedom of choice and freedom or harmony of being. The former is not an end in itself, as the contemporary progressive libertarians would have it. It is a *means* to the latter. I *can* choose, but I am obliged—by reason of my total dependence on God and my ensuing obligation to serve Him—to set my choosing within the framework of God's Law. The result is harmony or freedom of being, which is the consequence of right choice.

Progressives and Self-Fulfilment

This is what contemporary Progressives, under neo-modernist pressure, will not have. Their creed of self-fulfilment sought directly for its own sake forbids it; makes man sovereign, his reason autonomous, his conscience in all cases supreme. Thus, in the progressive scheme of things, there can be no place for authority and this by reason of the brake it applies to self-fulfilment directly sought for itself alone : to achieve this, say the Progressives, man must run free, finding the whole of himself in his own (supposed) sovereignty, subject to none; making his own truth, his own law and, indeed, his own God. Where the secular humanists in the Church are concerned, God is no more and no less than man fulfilled : the old heresy of Immanentism, once again; we have had it before. Out of this and parallel with it, we have the attack on dogma, which is supportive of man as the direct creation of God, of original sin and the Fall, of Christ as divine, of the Redemption, of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. If one is to run free and untrammelled, making his own life and pursuing directly his own fulfilment, he must, say the Progressives, run without restraint—master of his own destiny and his own life—making his own law. Again, the libertarian dream, which has bitten into the Church so badly in these latter days.

It would be quite wrong to see the neo-modernist dream as something peculiar to our own times. Its history is as old as the world. Adam fell for it and Christ was tempted with it in the desert when the Devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world, which were in his power and said that they would be Christ's if, kneeling down, He (Christ) would adore him (Satan). What Christ was being asked for in fact was that he would suit his teaching to the mood of the contemporary, pagan world; do, in other words, exactly what the neo-Modernists and misguided Progressives are doing in the Church today. Be yourself, they say, through the denial of yourself; i.e. of your essence as made by God and, thereby, totally dependent on Him; in addition, redeemed by His Son, Who came and died on the Cross to give us not death, but life more abundantly which can be found only in His loving service.

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The Case Against the Third Rite

FR. PETER J. ELLIOTT

IN his article *Confession: Case for General Absolution* (*The Leader* 23/1/83), Fr. Leopold Sabourin, SJ, signed on the basis of his own exegesis of New Testament texts.

He went on to present an historical and theological case in favour of making General Absolution (the Third Rite of Reconciliation) the normal form of the Sacrament of Penance.

I believe his interpretation of New Testament material is wrong. I believe that his historical account is inadequate. More seriously, I believe that his theological case is not Catholic, rather, a flat contradiction of Catholic teaching concerning the Sacrament of Penance.

What pastoral evidence he added can be overturned by a much stronger personalist case for private confession and against the Third Rite. By blurring distinctions, Fr. Sabourin has fallen into "harmonising" texts, in order to reach a general conclusion. He wants to play down the judicial act of bind/loose, retain/forgive, on which Confession and absolution rest, so as to promote absolution of a group as an expression of divine mercy and forgiveness.

He misses out on a vital distinction between the mercy and forgiveness of God, offered to us in Christ Jesus, and *the way* this is mediated to us through the judicial reconciling ministry of the Apostles and their successors. God forgives, but through the act of the ordained men in his Church.

Bind/loose, retain/forgive are judicial expressions within the context of Rabbinic Judaism, that is, Rabbis making decisions on specific interpretation or application of the Law, Torah. In turn, this rested upon the earlier tradition of the judges in Israel and the kings. The Gospels show us how Our Lord set up the 12 Apostles of his New Israel to apply and interpret his new Law, his new Torah.

The "judicial" role of the confessor is one of reconciling love, of mercy and forgiveness

The mysterious "twelve thrones" of Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:30, are Christ's own expression of the bind/loose, retain/forgive ministry of the Apostles and their successors in the Church. But how can the minister of reconciliation "bind" or "retain" if he does not *know* the "matter" put before him by some believer seeking the ministry of the Keys? The judicial theme is essential and unavoidable in the Synoptic Gospels, men exercising the "authority" of the forgiving Christ.

When we turn to John's Gospel, modern scholarship assures us of its "Jewishness", and the Council of Trent gives an authoritative interpretation of the retain/forgive commission in the post-Resurrection event of John 20:23.

Not that the inspired Magisterium needs scholarly endorsement, but it is interesting to note the way such scholarship is in harmony with the Jewish tradition expressed in the judicial terms of Trent. (*On the Most Holy Sacrament of Penance and Extreme Unction*, Chapter 6).

But the "judicial" role of the confessor is one of reconciling love, of mercy and forgiveness, and has developed as such with the wisdom of centuries of practice and pastoral theology.

A good case can be made for the Eucharist as the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Fr. Sabourin's use of "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matthew 7:1) against the confessor guiding conscience is so offensive and out of context as to merit the sharp reproof I am sure he would give to any Fundamentalist waving little proof-texts against the Church.

To set such material amidst the usual rhetoric about

reconciliation is only a way of blurring distinctions, so as to blur the Sacrament of Penance as we have it today.

No historian could pretend that the early history of the Sacrament of Penance is clear. But it is time to lay to rest the hoary old line that "the more individualised form" of private confession "was introduced and propagated by Celtic monks".

There is much earlier evidence of personal confession well before the Irish systematised it.

In his *In Leviticum Homiliae* 2.4, Origen refers to confession to a bishop or priest.

Pope St. Leo the Great explicitly referred to private confession to a priest as a sufficient alternative to those who did not want to be embarrassed by the widespread practice of public confession of sins (Epist. 168.2).

Whether a public act or a private act, the confession of sins was in a judicial context in the early centuries of the Church. Origen even gives advice on how to seek a good confessor. The favoured term was not "reconciliation", but "confession", in Greek *exhomologesis*. This may encourage catechists who still teach children the sensible familiar word, because the mites can barely pronounce the richer biblical term. I would hasten to add that a good case can be made for the Eucharist as *the* Sacrament of Reconciliation, the goal of the process of Sacramental Penance.

When penitents came before the bishop in the early centuries, it seems as if the bishop knew their sins. Now, *how* did he know their sins? He even gave graded penances, in terms of time, later passing into the old system of "days" or "quarantines" for indulgences.

But when we look through the public or private forms of Penance, before the Irish monks systematised the private way, we always find the judicial essential, that New Testament ministry of men who share not only in the prophetic and priestly work of Jesus, but also his kingly, judicial work.

Unfortunately for those who want to blur history, we find no evidence of General Absolution, the Third Rite, in those early centuries. This is one reason why the current law of the Church hedges it in with certain precautions,

making it plain that only emergency or extraordinary reasons can ever justify it.

Fr. Sabourin says, "With all due respect for Trent, I find nothing in Revelation requiring us to understand absolution as judicial".

My Vatican II documents, *Dei Verbum*, on Revelation, tell me that I have to take the Gospels as essential to Revelation. But, as we can see above, the judicial theme is evident in these Gospels, and as such has passed into the teaching, law and practice of the Church concerning Sacramental Penance.

I believe Fr. Sabourin has failed to see a distinction between the word "forgive" and "absolve". This may explain his respectful dissent from Trent and his harmonising of Scripture.

God alone can forgive us our sins. But we receive this forgiveness as his people through absolution. This is why the priest never says "I forgive you", but, "I absolve you", meaning, "I cut you free" or "I loose you from your bonds". A pastoral judicial decision is necessary for him to act in the Person of Christ and reconcile us to God and to the Catholic community when he absolves.

Having re-interpreted Trent, Fr. Sabourin seems to end up with a Protestant version of Penance, as if it were some declaration of divine mercy, designed to elicit a subjective response from those in the group who have the faith which justifies them. His proposals approximate to the practice of some Anglicans.

For those with access to the Decrees and Canons of Trent, Canon IX, on Penance, would seem to place a severe "anathema" on Fr. Sabourin, who argues "that the confession of the penitent is not required in order that the priest may be able to absolve him".

Vatican II rightly restored the community emphasis to the celebration of Penance, later embodied in the new rites. But Fr. Sabourin is arguing for a step further, to make General Absolution the normal rite of Penance, even during Mass. I believe this reflects a naive understanding of the pastoral needs and problems of people in the modern world.

If bishops and priests really listened, they would hear

Catholic people demanding more personal service. They would read the "signs of the times" and hear the cries of the guilty, the depressed and the confused for personal healing, for counsel, for direction in conscience and prayer life, for the richly rewarding ministry of those liberating words, "I absolve you from your sins. . . ."

'Only the revival of robust Catholicism . . . can counter the drift away from our family . . .'

Where, by contriving situations or breaking rules, General Absolution has become "the norm", the personal needs of many are no longer met. Absolution is given which may be invalid, or at least doubtful, leaving some persons perplexed.

Laity are encouraged to "shop around" and seek the Third Rite, "because it's easier", and priests, we priests, are tempted to a laziness which keeps us from preaching, promoting and providing private confession.

This decadent trend, no matter how pleasant it seems as "communal experience" etc., is undermining the great practical strength of Australian Catholicism, the tradition of devout and regular confession.

Recently, *The Leader* gave out the information about many young Catholics drifting away into Fundamentalist sects. Why are they attracted beyond the Church?

Dare we admit that they leave our family because other groups challenge them with conversion, repentance, a call to grace and discipline, religion resting on saving facts and not agnostic interpretations of the Bible. . . ?

Dolling up worship with dated gimmicks will never bring them back. Some left because of that. Only the revival of a robust Catholicism which takes people and their choices seriously can counter that kind of drift away from our family.

But, to my mind, General Absolution does not make people, their actions, seriously. The person is absorbed in the throng. We seem to slide back to the early view of sin and guilt in the Old Testament and away from the personal responsibility — and response — of later Judaism and the Gospel of Christ.

The Third Rite is "easier", soft shrift, short shrift; what Dietrich Bonhoeffer tartly described as "cheap grace".

All Sacraments are open to our use or abuse. But it seems foolish to re-shape a Sacrament by making it utterly different from all the others. Can anyone show me a Sacrament which is received by a group?

Marriage involves the covenant bond of two persons, making personal commitment.

Baptism, the Eucharist, Confirmation, all are received by individuals, taken seriously, treated as important persons by the God who cherishes each individual soul.

The communal context, the Mystical Body, God's People, is essential for any Sacrament, but let us never imagine that the health of the Church can be built up by any other way than the faithful and devout sacramental practice of individuals.

My last pastoral consideration would be General Absolution as it has turned out in the ecclesiastical laboratory of Holland. As Fr. Jan Bots, SJ, describes it, "there was almost a complete end to private confession" (*Communion*, Fall 1979, p. 305).

To propose General Absolution as a norm is to propose the death of a Sacrament. That was perceived by the bishops at Trent when the Reformers assaulted the judicial element in Penance.

Fr. Sabourin may sincerely argue for General Absolution. But as we enter this Holy Year of Redemption and Reconciliation, on grounds of scholarship and pastoral urgency, others may well put a different proposal to the forthcoming Synod of Bishops: that, for the health, unity and peace of the Church, the Third Rite, General Absolution, should be suppressed.

Encounters : 2

Et populi meditati sunt inania (Ps. 2)

W. M. QUIRK

"Hello, did you have a good service?"

The question was meant in kindly fashion, an acknowledgment of the effort I had made to get to Mass; a long tramp on the dusty road under the North-African sun. I still remember over the space of forty years how odd the question seemed. Never before had I considered, or heard anyone discuss, whether a Mass had been a good or bad or indifferent service. After a moment of hesitation, while I pondered the novelty of the idea, I replied in the affirmative, hoping the subject would not be pursued, and went off to think about what I might have said.

The most useful thought which came to me later that day was one which has often been in my mind these past few years. It was the recollection of a Jesuit priest, only a few years earlier, using all the emphasis at his command to drum into the heads of his schoolboy hearers that the Mass was not a service at all. If there were no congregation, you could not have a service, but the Mass was quite different; it had the same infinite value, whether or not there were people present, simply because in essence it was the action of Christ, the great High Priest.

I have to admit that, with mischievous intent, I am now occasionally guilty of asking the same question. It is encouraging, of course, when I get a reproof in reply but, as often as not, the response will be a serious assessment of how good the "service" has been. Perhaps the verdict: "fantastic", indicating that there has been great bonhomie, with lots of cheerful smiles, catchy tunes and strumming on guitars. Or the reply may be: "rather dull; that priest can't make it go, he can't even look cheerful". We should not be too censorious over this sort of view. The sermon and the singing have, after all, always been legitimate matter for appraisal. That comment should now be exten-

ded on the above lines to take account of the personality of the celebrant, the air of cheerfulness or gravity with which the Mass is offered, the apparent disposition of the other worshippers, is but the natural consequence of ideas that have been widely propagated. Eminently reasonable, some would say; in face of the compliance rate of about forty per cent on the part of Catholics towards their obligation to attend Mass on Sunday, it is urgent and necessary that people should find it attractive for whatever reason, so that they go home with a feeling of well-being, resolved to come again. The application of this proposition unfortunately puts us on a path which leads to the loss of that awe and reverence which should be inseparable from the celebration of Mass; it leads us to overlook the prime motive for attending, the duty of worship owed by the creature to his Creator; and in the end, it disguises the reality of what is taking place.

Many different influences are at work in what we see and hear at Mass. For some years, we have had among us those who seem to have set out to obscure Catholic Eucharistic Doctrine, like the priest who told his congregation that it was their faith that brought Christ to the altar or the one who reworded the *Orate fratres* to exclude mention of sacrifice. More often, though, it is fair to say, there is little evidence of irregular intent, but many an indication that the "service" concept has taken over. Minor indications usually in this country—exhortations to answer up louder in order to show interest, announcements as to what comes next and where to find it in print. On the Continent, one can experience the "animators" who are employed to stir up enthusiasm with their frequent, obtrusive interventions. If we are to judge from the discussion that continues, there remains a feeling of bafflement that the right formula has not been found; the search will not be called off and congregations will doubtless be enjoying a progressive programme of infelicities, inanities or irregularities at their "services". In how many churches, after another decade of development, shall we expect to see the Holy Mass offered with the reverence and devotion demonstrated in this country by Pope John Paul?

Very many words have been expended these past twenty years over the congregation's participation in the Mass.

None of them really add anything to the basic principles so clearly expounded by Pope Pius XII in *Mediator Dei*. At best, what we have heard since is simply the multiplication of ideas on ways of achieving that participation. In the process, we have overlooked those wise observations of Pius XII on the limitations of our human nature :

“People differ so widely in character, temperament and intelligence that it is impossible for them all to be affected in the same way by the same communal prayers, hymns and sacred actions. Besides, spiritual needs and dispositions are not the same in all, nor do these remain unchanged in the same individual at different times.”

Until the developments following the Council, account was taken of those simple truths. At a low Mass (whether dialogue or not), there were always those few minutes of silence during the Offertory and the Canon when, with distraction at a minimum, all were able to recollect themselves and attend to the meaning of the great mystery that was being enacted, joining themselves with devotion in union with Christ. It will be remembered that, for the same purpose, the 1958 decree on music in the liturgy recommended that, even at a sung Mass, there should be a sacred silence after the Consecration.

At the present day, by contrast, we are subject to the tyranny of the spoken (or sung) word from beginning to end of every Mass, an endless cascade of formulas which, even in the most favourable circumstances, can present a formidable obstacle to recollection and cultivation of the right dispositions. For very many, the circumstances are rarely so favourable and genuine participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice to the end outlined in *Mediator Dei** is occasion for almost heroic effort.

Much easier, of course, just to “have a good service”.

* “That the souls of those present may be united as closely as possible to the divine Redeemer, that their lives may become holier and holier, and the glory of the heavenly Father be ever increased.”

"Since it is of the very nature of the church that the power to consecrate the eucharist is imparted only to the bishops and priests who are constituted its ministers by the reception of Holy Orders, the church holds that the Eucharistic mystery cannot be celebrated in any community except by an ordained priest", the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said in a letter to the world's bishops made public Sept. 8. The letter was dated Aug. 6.

The Minister of the Eucharist

(LETTER TO WORLD'S BISHOPS)

I. Introduction

1. In teaching that the priestly or hierarchial ministry differs essentially and not only in degree from the common priesthood of the faithful, the Second Vatican Council expressed the certainty of faith that only bishops and priests can confect the Eucharistic mystery. Although all the faithful indeed share in the one and the same priesthood of Christ and participate in the offering of the Eucharist, it is only the ministerial priest who, in virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, can confect the eucharistic sacrifice in the person of Christ and offer it in the name of all Christian people.

2. In recent years, however, certain opinions have come to be promulgated and at times translated into practice which deny the above teaching and consequently cause harm to the innermost life of the church. Such opinions, which are widespread in various forms and with different lines of argument, have begun to attract some of the faithful themselves, either because they claim to be based on a scholarly foundation or because they are presented as responding to the needs of the pastoral care and sacramental life of Christian communities.

3. That is why this sacred congregation, prompted by a desire to offer its particular services to the bishops in a true collegial spirit, wishes to restate here some of the essential points of the church's doctrine on the minister of the Eucharist, transmitted by her living tradition and expressed in previous documents of the magisterium. The congregation takes full account of the integral vision of the priestly ministry as presented by the Second Vatican Council, but in the present situation it considers it a matter of urgency to make clear the essential role of the priest.

II. Erroneous Opinions

1. The promoters of these new opinions maintain that every Christian community, from the very fact it is united in the name of Christ and thus enjoys his undivided presence (cf. Mt. 18:20), is endowed with all the powers which the Lord wished to give to his church.

It is asserted, moreover, that the church is apostolic in the sense that all those who have been washed in Baptism and incorporated into her, having been made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Christ, are also truly successors of the apostles. From the fact that the whole church was prefigured in the apostles it would then follow that the words of institution of the Eucharist addressed to them were intended for everyone.

2. As a consequence, although necessary for the good ordering of the church, the ministry of bishops and priests would not differ from the common priesthood of the faithful with respect to the participation in the priesthood of Christ in the strict sense, but only insofar as its exercise is concerned. The so-called role of moderating the community—including also that of preaching and presiding at the Eucharist—would therefore be only a simple mandate conferred for the orderly functioning of the community itself, but it ought not to be “sacralized”. The call to such a ministry would not amount to a new “priestly” capacity—strictly speaking—and for that reason the term “priesthood” is generally avoided—nor would it impart any character with ontological significance for the sake of the ministers, but would simply give expression before the community that the original power conferred in the sacrament of Baptism had become effective.

3. In virtue of the apostolicity of the single local communities, in which Christ would be no less present than in an episcopal structure, each community, no matter how small, in the event of its being deprived for some time of such a constituent element as the Eucharist, could "reappropriate" its original powers. Also it would have the right of designating its own president and animator and conferring on him all the necessary faculties for leading the community itself, including that of presiding at and consecrating the Eucharist. It is moreover asserted that God himself would not refuse in such circumstances to grant, even without a sacramental rite, the power be normally gives through sacramental ordination.

Such is the conclusion also reached by the fact that the celebration of the Eucharist is often understood simply as the action of the local community, which is gathered together to commemorate in the breaking of bread the Last Supper of the Lord. It would therefore be more a fraternal celebration in which the community comes together and gives expression to its identity than the sacramental renewal of the sacrifice of Christ, whose saving power extends to everyone, be they present or absent, living or dead.

4. Ironically, erroneous opinions regarding the necessity of ordained ministers for the celebration of the Eucharist have even led some to place less and less value upon the sacraments of Orders and the Eucharist in their catechesis.

III. The Doctrine of the Church

1. Although they may be expressed in various ways with different nuances, all these opinions lead to the same conclusion: that the power to confect the sacrament of the Eucharist is not necessarily connected with sacramental ordination. It is evident that such a conclusion is absolutely incompatible with the faith as it has been handed down, since not only does it deny the power conferred on priests, but it undermines the entire apostolic structure of the church and distorts the sacramental economy of salvation itself.

2. According to the teaching of the church, the word of the Lord and the divine life which he has given to us have been destined from the very beginning to be lived and

shared in a single body, which the Lord builds up for himself throughout the ages. This body, which is the church of Christ, is continually endowed with the gifts of ministries by him "from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God" (Col. 2:19).

This structure of ministries finds clear expression in sacred tradition in the powers entrusted to the apostles and their successors: to sanctify, to teach and to govern in the name of Christ. The apostolicity of the church does not mean that all believers are apostles, not even in a collective sense, and no community has the power to confer apostolic ministry, which is essentially bestowed by the Lord himself. Therefore when the church in her creeds calls herself apostolic, she expresses, besides the doctrinal identity of her teaching with that of the apostles, the reality of the continuation of the work of the apostles by means of the structure of succession in virtue of which the apostolic mission is to endure until the end of time.

This apostolic succession which constitutes the entire church as apostolic is part of the living tradition which has been for the church from the beginning, and continues to be, her particular form of life. And so, those who cite isolated texts of scripture in opposition to this living tradition in trying to justify new structures have strayed from the truth.

3. The Catholic Church, which has developed through the ages and continues to grow by the life given to her by the Lord through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, has always maintained her apostolic structure, faithful to the tradition of the apostles which lives and endures in her.

When she imposes hands on those to be ordained and invokes upon them the Holy Spirit, she is conscious of handing on the power of the Lord, who makes the bishops, as successors of the apostles, partakers in a special way of his threefold priestly, prophetic and royal mission. In turn, the bishops impart, in varying degrees, the office of their ministry to various persons in the church.

And so, even though all the baptized enjoy the same dignity before God, in the Christian community, which was deliberately structured hierarchically by its divine Founder,

there have existed from its earliest days specific apostolic powers deriving from the sacrament of Holy Orders.

4. Included among these powers which Christ entrusted exclusively to the apostles and their successors is the power of confecting the Eucharist. To the bishops alone, and to the priests they have made shares in their ministry which they themselves have received, is reserved the power of renewing in the mystery of the Eucharist what Christ did at the Last Supper.

In order that they may be able to carry out their work, especially a work so important as confecting the Eucharistic mystery, our Lord marks out in a spiritual manner those whom he calls to the episcopate and to the priesthood. He does this with a special sign through the sacrament of orders, a sign also called a "character" in solemn documents of the church's magisterium. In this way he so configures them to himself that, when they pronounce the words of consecration, they do not act on a mandate from the community but, "*in persona Christi*, which means more than just 'in the name of Christ' or 'in the place of Christ' since the celebrant, by reason of this special sacrament, identifies himself with the eternal high priest, who is both author and principal agent of his own sacrifice in which truly no one can take his place.'" Since it is of the very nature of the church that the power to consecrate the Eucharist is imparted only to the bishops and priests who are constituted its ministers by the reception of Holy Orders, the church holds that the Eucharistic mystery cannot be celebrated in any community except by an ordained priest, as expressly taught by the Fourth Lateran Council.

Individual faithful or communities who because of persecution or lack of priests are deprived of the Holy Eucharist for either a short or longer period of time, do not thereby lack the grace of the Redeemer. If they are intimately animated by a desire for the sacrament and united in prayer with the whole church, and call upon the Lord and raise their hearts to him, by virtue of the Holy Spirit they live in communion with the whole church, the living Body of Christ, and with the Lord himself. Through their desire for the sacrament in union with the church, no matter how distant they may be physically, they are intim-

ately and really united to her and therefore receive the fruits of the sacrament; whereas those who would wrongly attempt to take upon themselves the right to confect the Eucharistic mystery end up my having their community closed in on itself.

None of this derogates from the responsibility of bishops and priests and all members of the church to pray that "the Lord of the harvest, will send workers according to the needs of the people and the times (cf. Mt. 9:37ff) and to work with all their energy to make the Lord's call to the priestly ministry heard and welcomed, with humble and generous heart.

IV. Call to Vigilance

In recalling these points to the attention of the pastors of the church, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith desires to assist them in the ministry of feeding the flock of the Lord with the food of truth, of safeguarding the deposit of faith and of keeping intact the unity of the church. It is necessary to be strong in faith and to resist error even when it masquerades as piety, so that by professing truth in love, we may embrace in the love of the Lord those who have strayed (cf. eph. 4:15).

Catholics who attempt to celebrate the Eucharist outside the sacred bond of apostolic succession established by the sacrament of Orders exclude themselves from participating in the unity of the single body of the Lord: They neither nourish nor build up the community, they tear it apart.

Therefore it is the responsibility of the bishops to see to it that the erroneous opinions mentioned above do not continue to be spread either in catechetics or in the teaching of theology and, above all, to see to it that such theories are not put into practice. Whenever cases of this sort are discovered, it is their sacred responsibility to denounce them as completely foreign to the celebration of the Eucharist sacrifice and offensive to the community of the church. If they should find that some catechists are even minimizing the central importance for the church of the sacraments of Holy Orders and the Eucharist, they should likewise do all they can to correct so distorted a teaching. For in fact it is to us that these words were addressed: "Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke

and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. . . . always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tm. 4:2-5).

In these circumstances, therefore, let this collegial concern find such a concrete application that the undivided church, even in the variety of local churches working together, may keep safe what was entrusted to her by God through the apostles. Fidelity to the will of Christ and the Christian dignity itself require that the faith handed down remain the same so that it may bring peace to all believers (cf. Rom. 15:13).

The supreme pontiff, John Paul II, in an audience granted to the undersigned cardinal prefect, gave his approval to this letter, drawn up in the ordinary session of this sacred congregation, and ordered its publication.

At Rome, from the offices of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Aug. 6, 1983, Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger
Prefect

Archbishop Jerome Hamer, OP
Secretary

THOUGHTS ON ST. THOMAS MORE

Right comfortless he lay,
And from his prison cell,
He watched the seasons pass:
He saw the shadows lengthen on the grass;
They told him it was May,
And in July,
He was to die.

Would he but sign his name,
And blessed, blessed freedom would be his:
But More thought this,

No better than the traitor's hateful kiss.

He to a terrifying death would go,
That in another day and age
A few, a very few,
Might also by the Grace of God say "No."

R.S.

According to the teachings of Vatican Council II, the Church of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church are one and the same complex reality. This article is of great importance, in view of the opinion held by many today, which would separate the two. Acknowledgements to the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*.

The Church of Christ and the Catholic Church

FR. JAMES T. O'CONNOR

WITH the support of numerous statements of the Magisterium, it was customary for Catholics prior to the Second Vatican Council to defend the thesis that they belonged to the "one, true Church" founded by Jesus Christ himself. For them, the Nicene confession of faith, "We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church" referred unambiguously to that Christian Community which was united in faith and obedience with the Bishop of Rome, the successor of Peter.

Since the celebration of the last Council, this sense of Catholic self-identity has been challenged and even denied. It is asserted that the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church are not the same reality. The Council, which used both expressions, namely, "Church of Christ" and "Catholic Church," is claimed to have drawn a distinction between the two, thereby indicating that they are not one and the same. In speaking of the society founded by Jesus himself, the Council referred to the "Church of Christ" and confessed that this "is the only Church of Christ which we profess in the Creed to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic."¹ It is, however, nowhere stated that this unique Church of Christ *is* the Roman Catholic

Church, nor is it affirmed that Jesus founded the historical reality which we know as the Catholic Church—at least so it is claimed. While teaching, indeed, that the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, the Council explicitly recognised the right of other Christian bodies to be called “Churches,” thus giving authoritative confirmation to a use of language which was long-standing and consistent, at least in respect to the separated Churches of the East, i.e., Eastern Orthodoxy.

The bishops at Vatican II, furthermore, formally admitted that the Christian Churches and Communities separated from the Catholic Church have been and are being used by the Holy Spirit as “means of salvation”¹ for those who belong to them.

Now it must be admitted that we are faced with three facts concerning the teaching of Vatican II about the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church: first, the assertion that the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church; second, the admission that at least some Communities not in union with the Catholic Church are truly Churches; third, the recognition that such Churches and even other ecclesial Communities serve as “means of salvation” in the effectuation of God’s redemptive plan in Christ. Since Vatican II did not give us an elaborated ecclesiology, theological reflection is left to give an integrated picture of its teaching, keeping in mind the three facts just mentioned.

That theological picture has developed in some authors in the following way. The one Church of Christ, founded by him, now perdurees or subsists in various forms or manifestations, each of which retain—to a greater or lesser degree—the essential ecclesiastic characteristics willed by the Lord. No one of the various forms can claim exclusive identity with the Church of Christ—which now exists like some kind of Platonic form which variously informs different communities. De facto, the unique Church founded by Christ now exists in different and separated bodies, although not necessarily in equal degrees.

The consequences of such a view are manifold. Among the more important may be cited the diminishment in

appreciation of the Church's unique role as means and sacrament of salvation, and the necessity of the Sacraments and of sacramental grace. Questions have been raised about the true ecumenicity of those Councils held since the division among Christians became a fact, particularly about the Councils of Trent and Vatican I. The missionary activity of the Church has likewise suffered, being reduced at times in theory and in practice to no more than efforts to better the temporal, social, political and economic situation of peoples. Efforts for conversion among non-Christians and for the bringing of non-Catholic Christians as individuals into full communion with the Catholic Church have been adversely affected.

I wish to address this claim

In response to such a state of affairs, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued in 1973 the Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* which said in part:

... Catholics are bound to profess that through the gift of God's mercy they belong to that Church which Christ founded and which is governed by the successors of Peter and the other Apostles, who are the depositories of the original apostolic tradition, living and intact, which is the permanent heritage of doctrine and holiness of that same Church.

The followers of Christ are therefore not permitted to imagine that the Church of Christ is nothing more than a collection—divided, but still possessing a certain unity—of Churches and ecclesial Communities. Nor are they free to hold that Christ's Church does not really exist anywhere today and that it is to be considered only as an end which all Churches and ecclesial Communities must strive to reach.³

These conclusions of *Mysterium Ecclesiae* were not new. In an article published after the Council and before the Declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Karl Rahner had anticipated much of the thought and even the verbal expression of the Congregation's statement. He wrote:

The Catholic Church cannot think of herself as one among many historical manifestations in which the

same God-man Jesus Christ is made present, which are offered by God to man for him to choose whichever he likes. On the contrary she must necessarily think of herself as the one and total presence in history of the one God-man in his truth and grace, and as such as having a fundamental relationship to all men . . . For this reason the Catholic Church cannot simply think of herself as one among many Christian Churches and communities on an equal footing with her. . . . And the Church cannot accept that this unity is something which must be achieved only in the future and through a process of unification between Christian Churches, so that until this point is reached it simply would not exist.⁴

Unfortunately, *Mysterium Ecclesiae* did not have the desired effect. Appeal was made from it to the teaching of the Council itself, with the claim that *Mysterium Ecclesiae* was a restrictive reading of the conciliar texts which, supposedly differentiated between the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church.

It is this claimed lack of harmony between the Conciliar documents and the Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* which I wish to address directly in this paper. With the publication of the final volumes, including the Index, of the *Acta Synodalia* of Vatican II, the tools for such a study are now at hand. My purpose, therefore, is not to give an overall ecclesiology, nor to show the coherence between the doctrine of the last Council with previous teaching. Nor is my purpose to engage in theological polemic. (For that reason, I have not attributed the "alternate" ecclesiology sketched above to any individual theologian or theologians, although such could readily be done). Rather, I should hope to determine the clear meaning of the sections of *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio* pertinent to the question at hand, using the *Acta* to establish, when possible, the precise intention of the wording found in the final conciliar Constitution and Decree.

The relationes contain the key

Perhaps a preliminary word on the *Acta Synodalia* is pertinent. They comprise twenty-five volumes, containing all the Council's documents in their various stages of

development, as well as the written and oral expressions of all the participants of the Council in respect to all of the Council's work. Each of the final documents of the Council went through various drafts. These drafts or *schemata* were written by special commissions appointed for the purpose. When a commission had completed its work, the draft or *schema* was then presented to the Council fathers by one of the bishops responsible for its preparation. This presentation is technically called the *Relatio* and its purpose was to introduce the document, and to explain to the bishops its purpose and meaning as a whole, as well as the purpose and meaning of its parts. Therefore, the various presentations or *relationes* are the key to the correct interpretation of a given document. Without the *relatio* one could be "left in the dark" as to the precise intention of some of the Council's statements.

Nevertheless, the *relatio* alone is not sufficient. The document once presented had to be accepted by the bishops as the working document for discussion. This done, each section of the document in question was then discussed by the bishops with a view to final approval. Frequently, suggestions would be made to emend wording or even various parts of the working document. These suggestions, called *modi*, were then taken by the commission responsible for drafting the document, and either incorporated or rejected. The document was then resubmitted to the bishops as a whole, together with an official explanation concerning the incorporation or rejection of the various *modi*. It is these explanations, together with the original or subsequent *relationes*, which must be used in determining the final intention of the text. Fortunately, the final documents are normally clear enough as to their meaning and intent. Recourse to the various *relationes*, and responses to the *modi* or suggested emendations is not necessary for an adequate understanding of the text. In our case, however, since the wording of the final documents is subject to various interpretations, one must recur to the *relationes* and the official explanations concerning the emendations or corrections.

Disputed phrase is "subsists in"

We may now look first at the Dogmatic Constitution

On The Church, *Lumen Gentium*, and particularly at no. 8 (Chapter One) of that document, in which the disputed phrase "subsists in" is found.

The original draft or scheme for the Constitution On The Church was submitted to the Council in 1962. This draft stated that the Roman Catholic Church and the Mystical Body of Christ were identical and that only the Roman Catholic Church could be called, *sola iure*, Church.⁵ As to who belonged to this Church, the Relator Cardinal Franic admitted that membership in an improper or analogous sense was a freely disputed question.⁶

This draft was not acceptable to the bishops as a working document. It was considered too restrictive, too scholastic and lacking an ecumenical spirit. Nevertheless, even Bishop Christopher Butler, who spoke against the draft could ask rhetorically: "Who of those (who wish his draft rejected) would deny that the Church in communion with the vicar of Christ, the successor of Peter, is that Church which Christ founded?"⁷

A second scheme or draft was submitted to the bishops in 1963. This draft was accepted for discussion as the working document, and after emendations, became the *Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium*. Number seven (Chapter One) of this working document read:

This holy Synod teaches and solemnly professes that there is only one Church of Jesus Christ . . . which the Savior after his Resurrection handed over to Peter and the Apostles and to their successors. . . . Therefore this Church . . . is the Catholic Church, governed by the Roman Pontiff and the bishops in communion with him.⁸

Notice that the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church are identified: "Therefore this Church . . . is the Catholic Church." Along with much else in the working draft, this sentence was to be changed in the amended draft. That draft was presented to the Bishops at the 80th General Assembly of the Council on September 15, 1964. This amended draft was accompanied by a written *relatio* for each section or number of the document. What had been section or number seven in the working document had here become section or number eight, where it

still remains in the final Constitution *Lumen Gentium*. It read (and reads, since it was not further amended):

This is the only (*unica*) Church of Christ which we profess in the Creed to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic, and which Our Savior after His Resurrection handed over to Peter to be shepherded. . . . This Church established and ordained as a society in this world, subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the successor of Peter and the Bishops in communion with him, although outside her bodily structure there are found many elements of sanctification and truth which, as gifts proper to the Church of Christ, impel toward Catholic unity.⁹

Notice that, along with minor changes not pertinent to our theme, the "subsists in" has been substituted for "is". What, then, is the significance of this substitution and how is one to understand the entire number or section eight? The written *relatio* or explanation on the section reads as follows as found in the *Acta*.

From the great number of observations and objections which were brought forth by the bishops in respect to this paragraph (as it appeared in the working draft), it is evident that the intention and context of this section were not clear to all.

Now, the *intention* is to show that the Church, whose deep and hidden nature is described and which is perpetually united with Christ and His work, is concretely found here on earth in the Catholic Church. This visible Church reveals a mystery—not without shadows until it is brought to full light, just as the Lord Himself through His "emptying out" came to glory. Thus there is to be avoided the impression that the description which the Council sets forth of the Church is merely idealistic and unreal.

Therefore, a clearer subdivision is set forth, in which the following points are successively treated:

a) The mystery of the Church is present in and manifested in a concrete society. The visible assembly and the spiritual element are *not two realities*, but one complex reality embracing the divine and human, the means

of salvation and the fruit of salvation. This is illustrated by an analogy with the Word Incarnate.

b) The Church is one only (*unica*), and here on earth is present in the Catholic Church, although outside of her there are found ecclesial elements.¹⁰

I do not think the statement could be clearer. Number eight of *Lumen Gentium*, according to the official explanation, intends to teach that there is only one Church of Christ and that this Church is found concretely in the Catholic Church. Every Platonic-type of thinking is excluded. The concrete society and its spiritual element are not two realities, but rather one complex reality, the spiritual reality being both revealed and hidden by the concrete society, just as the humanity of Christ both revealed and hid the divinity of the Word.

The oral Relation on the whole of chapter one of *Lumen Gentium* makes the same points succinctly:

The mystery of the Church is not an idealistic or unreal creation, but rather exists in the concrete Catholic society itself, under the leadership of the successor of Peter and the bishops in communion with him. There are not two churches, but only one. . . .¹¹

In the face of such unequivocal declarations concerning the Church of Christ-Catholic Church, what is to be said of the substitution of "subsists in" for "is"? The written *relatio* gives the official explanation.

Certain words have been changed: in place of "is", "subsists in" is used so that the expression may be in better harmony with the affirmation about ecclesial elements which are present elsewhere.¹²

The reason for the change from "is" to subsists in" is, therefore, *technical precision*. The Council did not wish to appear to deny in one sentence what it would affirm in the next, namely, that ecclesial elements of sanctification and truth are present outside the visible society of the Catholic Church. We must now examine the nature of this technical precision more closely.

The phrase "subsists in" or "subsisting" is not peculiar to our text in *Lumen Gentium*, no. 8. It occurs five other times in the final documents of Vatican II, and it is informative to see how the popular Abbott translation of the

Conciliar texts translates these other appearances of the term or its variants.¹³

1. In the Decree on Ecumenism, no. 4 we find the sentence:

This unity, we believe, dwells in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose. . . .¹⁴ (The Latin reads: "in Ecclesia catholica subsistere credimus.")

2. The Declaration on Religious Freedom, no. 1 reads: First, this sacred Synod professes its belief that God Himself has made known to mankind the way in which men are to serve Him, and thus be saved in Christ. . . . We believe that this one true religion subsists in the catholic and apostolic Church.¹⁵

3. The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, no. 13, reads:

Upon the Moslems, too, the Church looks with esteem. They adore one God, living and enduring (Lat. "*viventum et subsistentem*").¹⁶

4. *Gaudium et Spec*, no. 10, reads:

What is this sense of sorrow, of evil, of death, which continues to exist despite so much progress?" (Lat. "*Quinan est sensus doloris, mali, mortis quae . . . subsistere pergunt?*")¹⁷

The fifth instance I shall leave for consideration below. Looking at the above usages, it can be seen that the word "subsistere" is variously translated as "to dwell in," "to exist," "to endure," as well as the literal "to subsist in." Depending on which translation one chooses, one gets a slightly different understanding of *Lumen Gentium*, no. 8. It would read:

This Church (of Christ) . . . dwells in the Catholic Church, governed by the successor of Peter.

This Church (of Christ) . . . exists in the Catholic Church governed by the successor of Peter.

This Church (of Christ) . . . endures in the Catholic Church governed by the successor of Peter.

This Church (of Christ) . . . subsists in the Catholic Church governed by the successor of Peter.

The rejections are significant

The question is: which of the translations best preserves the stated intention of L.G., no. 8 which is to assert

that the Church of Christ is “concretely found here on earth in the Catholic Church”? The importance of the question is highlighted when one realizes that the Council, in its Decree on the Catholic Oriental Churches (promulgated on the same day as *Lumen Gentium*), did not say that the Mystical Body of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, but rather that the Catholic Church *is* the Mystical Body of Christ. We read in *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, no. 2: “The holy and Catholic Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ . . .”¹⁸

An accurate answer to the question about the meaning and translation of “subsists in” can only be given if one examines the Council’s teaching concerning the relationship between the Catholic Church and the “ecclesial elements” present outside her visible boundaries, for, by official explanation, it is because of these ecclesial elements that the “subsists in” was introduced into the text. We must, therefore, look briefly at the *Decree on Ecumenism*, *Unitatis Redintegration*, and particularly at number 3 of that document. That number reads in part:

In this one and only Church of God certain schisms arose even from the very beginning . . .; in later ages wider dissensions were born, and large Communities were separated from full communion with the Catholic Church, and sometimes not without the fault of men on both sides. Those who are now born into these Communities and are imbued with the faith of Christ are not to be convicted of the sin of separation, and the Catholic Church embraces them with fraternal reverence and love. For those who believe in Christ and are properly baptized are established in a certain although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church. . . .

Furthermore, of the elements or goods, which taken together build up and vivify the Church herself, certain and even many outstanding ones are able to exist (the Latin is *exstare possunt*, not *existere possunt*) outside the visible bounds of the Catholic Church . . .; all these, which come from Christ and lead to Him, belong *by right* to the only Church of Christ (Lat. “*haec*

*omnia, quae a Christo proveniunt et ad Ipsum conducant, ad unicam Christi Ecclesiam iure pertinent.*¹

* * *

It follows that these separated Churches and Communities, although we believe they suffer from the cited defects, have not at all been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. The Spirit of Christ has not refused to use them as means of salvation, the efficacy of which is derived from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church (Lat. "*quorum virtus derivatur ab ipsa plenitudine gratiae et veritatis quae Ecclesiae catholicae concredita est*").¹⁹

Before the final votes, this entire section had been the subject of much discussion, and many suggested changes. Most of the suggestions were rejected by the commission responsible for drafting the document, but the reasons given for the rejections are significant for understanding the text itself.

It was suggested, for example, that to the sentence "all these (elements and gifts) . . . belong by right to the only Church of Christ" there be added the phrase "and through her are derived to all those who err in good faith." This was rejected on the grounds that these gifts are derived from Christ and that "the validity and efficacy of the many sacraments and other means of salvation are not able to be impeded by the Church since they depend not on the will and jurisdiction of the Church but on the salvific will of Christ."²⁰

The understanding is confirmed

Such a response would seem to indicate that the separated Churches and Communities function as means of salvation by or of themselves, directly dependent on Christ. That such is not the meaning, however, is immediately clarified by two subsequent responses. It is said that

Without doubt God uses the separated Communities, not indeed as separated, but as informed by the aforesaid ecclesial elements. . . .²¹

and that

The necessity of communion with the Catholic Church

to obtain the grace of Christ and salvation is sufficiently indicated in the whole context (of the document).²²

From these responses, found in the Acta, it can be deduced that the ecclesial elements and the means of sanctification which are present in the separated Churches and Communities are present there to the extent of their union with the Catholic Church. This truth is, in fact, affirmed by both *Lumen Gentium* and by *Unitatis Redintegration*. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 8 says that these elements are "gifts proper to the Church of Christ and impel toward Catholic unity". Even more clearly, the Decree on Ecumenism, no. 3, states that the efficacy of these elements and means of sanctification "is derived from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church". The insertion of "Catholic" is the clarifying point, avoiding efforts to invent the false distinction between "Church of Christ" and "Catholic Church". The present tense of the verbs in both sentences is also important. The Council is not speaking about "*vestigia Ecclesiae*", "traces of the Church" which the separated Churches and Communities retain and now hold as their own because they once were in full communion with the Catholic Church. Rather, the elements are operative here and now because they belong by right to the Church and *presently* derive their efficacy from the plenitude of grace entrusted to the Catholic Church. In other words, the ecclesial elements are elements of the Catholic Church presently operative in the separated Churches and Communities because of their real, although imperfect, unity with the Catholic Church.

This understanding of the nature of the ecclesial elements and their relation to the Catholic Church is confirmed in the Decree on Ecumenism in that fifth use of the word "subsists in" which we postponed mentioning above. In no. 13 of the Decree, we read:

(At the time of the Reformatio), many national or confessional Communion were separated from the Roman See. Among these, in which Catholic traditions and structures continue to subsist in part (Lat. "*in quibus traditiones et structurae catholicae ex parte subsistere pergunt*") is the Anglican Communion.

Thus, not only does the Church of Christ subsist in the Catholic Church, but elements of the Catholic Church subsist in the separated Churches and Communities. To that extent, and for that very reason, they function as means of salvation, drawing their efficacy from the fullness of grace and truth in the Catholic Church. For this reason it would seem to be true to say that, if it were possible that the Catholic Church disappear, the Catholic elements in the separated Churches and Communities would be deprived of their efficacy, having lost the source from which they draw here and now. It is also for that reason, I think, that Bishop Charue, giving the *relatio* for no. 14 of *Lumen Gentium*, could say that the Roman Catholic Church is necessary for salvation.²³

These conclusions follow

It is true, indeed, that the ecclesial elements in the separated Churches and Communities do not function because of a permissive act of jurisdiction of the Catholic Church. But this, as a general rule, is true within the visible bounds of the Church herself. Even a suspended archbishop can serve as an efficacious instrument of the Lord, but does so—like the separated Churches and Communities—not inasmuch as separation exists, but only because of the incomplete communion preserved with the Catholic Church.

Any student of St. Augustine's works will recognize that the teaching of Vatican Council II on the ecclesial elements present outside the visible bounds of the Catholic Church, as I have just attempted to outline it, is similar to Augustine's position on the matter taken during his controversy with the Donatists. He wrote in his tract *On Baptism*:

.... there is one church which alone is called Catholic; and whenever it has anything of its own in these communions of different bodies which are separate from itself, it is most certainly in virtue of this which is its own in each of them that she, not they, has the power of generation.²⁴

If I may now summarise the conclusions of this study and draw it to a close:

1. The official *relatio* on no. 8 of *Lumen Gentium* states that the intention of the paragraph was to show

that the Church of Christ is concretely found here on earth in the Catholic Church.

A response of the Commission to a suggested change in no. 3 of the Decree On Eucumenism states that the Decree "clearly affirms that only the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ."²⁵

The Bishops voted on the final drafts of *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio* in the context of these and many other like explanations. And the final documents, apart from an arbitrary reading or one done out of context, testify to a clear affirmation that the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church are not two realities, but only one.

2. It is affirmed that the Lord himself is the founder of this one Church.

3. The statement of *Mysterium Ecclesiae* that "Catholics are bound to profess that by the gift of God's mercy they belong to that Church which Christ founded..." is a fully accurate and concise restatement of the intention and teaching of the Church in Council at Vatican II.

4. Elements of this one Church are present outside her visible boundaries and are operative as means of salvation within the separated Churches and Communities. These elements belong to the Church by right, draw their efficacy from the Catholic Church, and are forces which impel to full communion with the Church.

5. The presence of these Catholic elements outside the visible bounds has occasioned a new terminology—not a new fact since the fact was seen already by Augustine. This terminology speaks of the Church of Christ as subsisting in the Catholic Church and of elements of this Catholic Church subsisting in the separated Christian Churches and Communities.

6. The separated Churches and Communities, despite the presence of Catholic elements are structurally deficient. This structural deficiency admits of greater and lesser degrees, depending on the nature and extent of their imperfect communion with the Catholic Church. The extent of that imperfect communion also determines their ability to be greater or lesser partial realizations of the one Catholic Church.²⁶

7. The presence of Catholic elements outside the visible boundaries of the Church cannot be understood in such a way as to imply a diminishment of these elements within the Church itself.

When a man is ordained a bishop, the element of apostolicity is not increased in the Church. Rather, there is extended to him a participation in what the Church herself fully possesses. Likewise, when he dies, the Church on earth is not diminished in respect to apostolicity.

So with the Catholic elements in the separated Churches and Communities. These elements are not like pieces of pie which have been carried away to exist elsewhere. The Catholic Church of Christ remains fully one even when the separated Churches share imperfectly in that unity. The diminishment occurs in what has been separated—and to the extent to which it is separated. To imagine otherwise would be to understand the ecclesial elements as material not spiritual realities. The number of those united to the Church may increase or decrease; the unity of the Church herself does not increase or decrease. And so with the other ecclesial elements.

Much more could be said

An analogy with the mystery of the Eucharist is appropriate. The number of consecrated Hosts in a ciborium has nothing to do with the fullness of the Lord's presence. He is fully present in one as he is in a hundred. So with the Church. Her unity does not grow; it is extended for others to share in.

There is much more that could and should be said. I am aware that there are many "loose ends". Something should be said about what makes some of the separated Communities Churches and others not. Something should be said about how the ecclesial elements present in the separated Churches and Communities manifest themselves in a richness of form and spirituality which would serve to enrich the Catholic Church herself. Much should be said on the whole notion of the Church as communion. Much more should be said about Our Lady as Mother of Unity. Enough could never be said on the role of the Eucharist. But, for now, the purpose of this article has,

I hope, been achieved. According to the teachings of Vatican Council II, the Church of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church are one and the same complex reality.

FOOTNOTES

1 *Lumen Gentium*, no. 8.

2 *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 3.

3 *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, no. 1. Trans., *The Pope Speaks*, vol. 18, no. 2 pp. 146-147.

4 K. Rahner, "Church, Churches and Religions," *Theological Investigations* X, Herder and Herder, New York, 1973, pp. 40-41.

5 *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, Typis Polyglots Vaticanis, Rome, vol. I, pt. 4, p. 15.

6 *Idem.*, p. 122.

7 *Idem.*, p. 389.

8 *Idem.*, vol. 2, ph. 1, pp. 219-220. "Docet autem Sacra Synodus et sollemniter profitetur non esse nisi unicum Jesu Christi Ecclesiam Salvator post resurrectionem suam Petro et Apostolis eorumque successoribus tradiit. . . . Haec igitur Ecclesia . . . est Ecclesia Catholica, a Romano Pontifice et Episcopis in eius communione directa. . . ."

9 *Idem.*, vol. 3, pt. 1, pp. 167-168. "Haec est unica Christi Ecclesia, quam in Symbolo unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam profiteamur, quam Salvator noster, post resurrectionem suam Petro pascendam tradidit, eique ac ceteris Apostolis diffundendam et regendam commisit, . . . Haec Ecclesia, in hoc mundo ut societas constituta et ordinata, subsistit in Ecclesia catholica, a successore Petri et Episcopis in eius communione gubernata, licet extra eius compaginem elementa plura sanctificationis et veritatis inveniuntur, quae ut don Ecclesiae Christi propria, ad unitatem catholicam impellunt."

10 *Idem.*, p. 176. "Ex magno numero observationum et obiectionum, quae de hac paragrapho a Patribus prolatae sunt, patet intentionem et contextum huius articuli non omnibus fuisse perspicua.

Intentio autem est ostendere, Ecclesiam, cuius descripta est intima et arcana natura, qua cum Christo Eiusque opere in perpetuum unitur, his in terris concrete inveniri in Ecclesia catholica. Haec autem Ecclesia empirica mysterium revelat, sed non sine umbris, donec ad plenum lumen adducatur, sicut etiam Christus Dominus per exinanitionem ad gloriam pervenit. Ita praecavetur impressio ac si descriptio, quam Concilium de Ecclesia proponit, esset mere idealistica et irrationalis.

Ideo magis dilucida *subdiviso* proponitur, in qua successive agitur de sequentibus:

a) *Mysterium Ecclesiae adest et manifestatur in concreta societate*. Coetus autem visibilis et elementum spirituale *non sunt duae res*, sed unde realitas complexa, complectens divina et humana, media salutis et fructus salutis. Quod per analogiam cum Verbo incarnato illustratur.

b) *Ecclesia est unica*, et his in terris adest in Ecclesia catholica, licet extra eam inveniuntur elementa ecclesialia."

11 *Idem.*, p. 180. "Mysterium Ecclesiae tamen non est figmentum idealisticum aut irrealis, sed existit in *ipsa societate concreta catholica*, sub ductu successoris Petri et Episcoporum in eius communione. Non duae sunt ecclesiae, sed una tantum. . . ."

12 *Idem.*, p. 177. "Quaedam verba mutantur: loco 'est' dicitur 'subsistit in' ut expressio melius concordet cum affirmatione de elementis ecclesialibus quae *alibi* adsunt."

13 *Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, S.J., America Press, New York.

14 *Idem.*, p. 348.

15 *Idem.*, p. 676-677.

16 *Idem.*, p. 663

17 *Idem.*, p. 208.

18 "Sancta et catholica Ecclesia, quae est Corpus Christi Mysticum. . . ."

19 The underlined words in the text have a history of their own. They were not present in the penultimate draft of the text, nor in the accepted emendations which the bishops voted upon chapter by chapter. On the 19th November, 1964, the Secretary General of the Council, Pericles Felici, announced that, on the following day, the vote on the final text as a whole would take place. In preparation for that vote, a printed version of the final text was circulated. It included 19 emendations "inserted by the Secretariat for Christian Unity, which in this way accepted suggestions of good-will which had been authoritatively expressed" (*Acta*, vol. 3., pt. 8, p. 442). Felici then listed the emendations. These corrections, in fact, had been proposed by Pop Paul VI and accepted by the Secretariat for Christian Unity which was responsible for drafting the Decree on Ecumenism. They were approved by the bishops in the final vote, held on Nov. 20 (cf. *Idem.*, p. 553 and 636-637).

Felici referred to these last minute additions as "clarifications" and such in fact they were. They clarify in the final text itself what might not otherwise have been clear, apart from a close reading of the *Acta*.

20 *Acta*, vol. 3, pt. 7, p. 33. ". . . bona enumerata ab ipso Christo in separatos derivantur; . . . validitas et efficacia plurium sacramentorum et aliorum mediorum salutis ab Ecclesia impediri nequeunt, cum non a voluntate et iurisdictione Ecclesiae, sed a voluntate salvifica Christi pendeant."

21 *Idem.*, p. 35. "Deus procul dubio utitur ipsis Communitatibus seiunctis, non quidem qua seiunctis, sed qua informatis praedictis elementis ecclesialibus, ad conferendam credentibus gratiam salutarem."

22 *Idem.*, p. 35. "Necessitas communionis cum Ecclesia catholica ad gratiam Christi et salutem obtinendam sufficienter indicatur in toto contextu."

23 *Acta.*, vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 202. He later stated that the ratio retained its value and repeated the cited remark (*Idem.*, p. 467).

24 St. Augustine, "On Baptism," *An Augustine Reader*, ed. by John O'Meara, Doubleday, Image, Garden City, N.Y., 1973, p. 220. The theme is frequent in Augustine. On the fact that the ecclesial elements "belong by right to the Catholic Church, cf. In Johannem, VI, 15-16.

25 *Acta*, vol. 3, pt. 12. "Postea clare affirmatur solam Ecclesiam catholicam esse veram Ecclesiam Christi."

26 It is in this sense that the following statement must be understood. "In his coetibus unica Christi Ecclesia, quasi tamquam in Ecclesiis particularibus, quamvis imperfecte, praesens et medianibus elementis ecclesiasticis aliquo modo actiosa est" (*Acta*, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 335).

FROM "THE CATHOLIC RAMBLER": 11/2/84

"In accordance with the present trend to remove all unessentials, such as statues, from the sanctuary, it is being suggested that the chair on the sanctuary of the Rue de Bac Chapel in Paris, on which Our Lady sat when appearing to St. Catherine Labouré, should be moved to a side chapel."

R.S.

The Author writes : "Recently I heard a very fine talk on the life of John Henry Newman and on the spiritual principles by which he strove to govern his life. The talk was quite informative and even inspiring, yet it left me in some doubt on two issues as to whether they might be understood in a way contrary to Catholic teaching. These issues arose from two statements made by the speaker concerning Newman's views. One of these was that 'Infallibility does not overrule conscience, conscience is always supreme'. The other was that 'a definition which meets the requirements for infallibility is very rare, and has occurred only once since Vatican I, in relation to the Assumption of Mary'. (The Assumption was defined as a doctrine of faith by Pope Pius XII on Nov. 1st, 1950.)

In this article I should like to examine only the first of these two statements in relation to Newman's teaching, and reserve the second for later consideration".

Newman on Conscience

JOHN J. MULLOY

BECAUSE of the frequent appeal to conscience today in order to claim the right to disobey Church teaching, it is important to see what Newman really meant by this belief. A principle may be true enough in its bare enunciation, but not true in the resonances it strikes in the minds of those who hear it — especially if the principle has been given a widespread misinterpretation. Thus, for example the principle, "Outside the Church there is no salvation" is one which is long standing in the Catholic Church. But to state this doctrine without giving any further explanation of it, might seem to imply that no one can be saved who is not a member of the visible, institutional Catholic Church.

— in other word, that all Protestants, Muslims, pagans, etc., are bound to be damned because they are not Catholics.

In like fashion, to assert the supremacy of conscience without further explanation as to how official Church teaching requires assent from the individual, is to allow for an illegitimate appeal to the rights of conscience. It can lead to the devaluation of conscience and its replacement by our own self-will.

The Guidance of the Holy Spirit

Let us see therefore what Newman believed about conscience and its obligations. First of all, in the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, written in late 1874 to defend Vatican Council I's decree of Papal infallibility against the charges brought against it by William Gladstone, former British prime minister, Newman admits:

"It seems, then, that there are extreme cases in which conscience may come into collision with the word of a Pope, and is to be followed in spite of that word". On an earlier page, he has specified what those cases might be, quoting certain 'weighty authorities' to support these exceptions from obedience to the Pope: "Therefore were the Pope to command anything against holy Scripture, or the articles of faith, or the truth of the sacraments, or the commands of natural or divine law, he ought not to be obeyed, but in such commands is to be passed over" (from *The Letter*, as given in *The Difficulties of Anglicans*, vol. II, pp. 246; 242).

Of course, according to Catholic teaching on Papal infallibility, the Pope would be prevented by the guidance of the Holy Spirit from issuing any such commands in his role as official teacher of the universal Church. He might hand down such command or opinions as a private theologian, as his own personal views, but not as the representative of the Church's *Magisterium*, teaching universally on faith and morals. And we should notice that this characteristic of infallibility does not apply to the teaching or commands of the bishops of individual countries, unless they are teaching in full union with the Pope, and not in contradiction to the natural law or to what has previously been taught. This fact may become important in case the American Bishops' pastoral on war and peace seeks to impose moral obligations

on the Christian conscience beyond those already included in the Church's official teaching.

In fact, in replying to Gladstone's charge that Catholics could not be loyal to an infallible Papal authority and still carry out their duties of obedience to the civil government under which they lived, Newman had declared :

"Again, were I actually a soldier or sailor in her Majesty's service, and sent to take part in a war which I could not in conscience see to be unjust, and should the Pope suddenly bid all Catholic soldiers and sailors to retire from the service, here again, taking the advice of others, as best I could, I should not obey him" (*ibid.*, pp. 241-242).

Of course, the issue involved here is that of the just or unjust war, and the individual's testimony of conscience concerning it. This is not to deny that nuclear weapons can raise more complex questions concerning the justice of methods to be used in the pursuance of a just aim; but it ill befits those who brush aside the idea of principles of the just war as outmoded or irrelevant, to try to impose obligations in conscience apart from those principles.

The Principle of Obedience

At the same time, Newman makes the following point concerning obedience to the Church in case of a conflict with civil authority. (This may be more in accord with our own time's more critical view of a State and a civil power which allow and encourage the spread of abortion and pornography — the physical and spiritual killing of human beings. For these practices undermine the moral basis of the State and call into question its right to obedience from its subjects.) Newman writes :

"I shall . . . confine myself to the consideration of (the Pope's) authority (in respect to which he is not infallible) in matters of conduct, and of our duty of obedience to him.

". . . but first, I beg to be allowed to say just one word on the principle of obedience itself, that is, by way of inquiring whether it is or is not now a religious duty.

"Is there then such a duty at all as obedience to ecclesiastical authority now ? Or is it one of those obsolete ideas which art swept away, as unsightly cobwebs, by the New Civilization ? Scripture says, 'Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of

od, whose faith follow'. And, 'Obey them that have the
 le over you; and *submit yourselves*; for they watch for
 our souls, as they may do it with joy and not with grief;
 r that is unprofitable for you'. . . I there any liberalistic
 ading of the Scripture passage? Or are the words only
 r the benefit of the poor and ignorant, not for the *Schola*
 s it may be called) of political and periodic writers, not
 r individual members of Parliament, not for statesmen
 d Cabinet ministers, and people of Progress? Which
 rty then is the more 'scriptural', those who recognize and
 rry out in their conduct texts like these, or those who
 n't? . . . it should be Mr. Gladstone's business, before
 ling us that we are slaves, because we obey the Pope, first
 all to tear away those texts from the Bible" (*ibid.*, pp.
 4-226).

A similar question to that of Newman's to Gladstone
 ight have been addressed to the American Bishops back
 1968, when, in their pastoral letter on *Human Life in Our*
 zy, they allowed for dissent from the encyclical *Humanae*
vitalitae by theologians and scholars, but not by the ordinary
 atholic. This was the particular *Schola* of our time which
 Bishops endeavoured to protect in the former's open
 ssent from Papal teaching. The failure of the Bishops then
 es much to discredit now any teaching of theirs on moral
 ues for which they wish to command respect and obed-
 ice. If the Pope's official teaching may be so easily
 ssented from by the *Schola* of theologians back in 1968,
 y should the ordinary Catholic pay any more attention
 the Bishops themselves in 1982 or 1983?

Next, with regard to the law that one must obey his
 nscience, Newman in this *Letter* speaks of it as the means
 which the individual comes to know the commands of
 e divine law:

"The divine law, then, is the rule of ethical truth, the
 ndard of right and wrong, a sovereign, irreversible, ab-
 ute authority in the presence of men and angels. . . . This
 v, as apprehended in the minds of individual men, is
 led 'conscience'; and though it may suffer refraction in
 ssing into the intellectual medium of each, it is not
 refore so affected as to lose its character of being the
 ine law, but still has, as such, the prerogative of com-

manding obedience". And he adds, "Hence it is never lawful to go against our conscience", and he cites the statement of the Fourth Lateran Council in support of this (*ibid.*, pp. 246-247).

However, Newman is careful to distinguish this conception of conscience from one that was increasingly held in his own day, which made man rather than God the final voice of authority in matters of conscience. He draws the following contrast between a true and false view of conscience :

"It (i.e. Catholic teaching) is founded on the doctrine that conscience is the voice of God, whereas it is fashionable on all hands now to consider it in one way or another a creation of man". He notes that many sincere Protestants as well as Catholics at that time would hold to the true view of conscience, but he stresses the fact that in the popular mind the word conscience no longer retains "the old, true Catholic meaning of the word". Instead, "When men advocate the rights of conscience, they in no sense mean the rights of the Creator, nor the duty to Him, in thought and deed, of the creature; but the right of thinking, speaking, writing, and acting, according to their judgment of their humour, without any thought of God at all. They do not even pretend to go by any moral rule, but they demand what they think is an Englishman's prerogative, for each to be his master in all things, and to profess what he pleases asking no one's leave, and accounting priest or preacher or writer, unutterably impertinent, who dares to say a word against his going to perdition, if he likes it, in his own way. Conscience has rights because it has duties; but in this age with a large portion of the public, it is the very right and freedom of conscience to dispense with conscience, to ignore a Law-giver and Judge, to be independent of unseen obligations. . . Conscience is a stern monitor, but in this century it has been superseded by a counterfeit, which the 18 centuries prior to it never heard of, and could not have mistaken for it, if they had,. It is the right of self-will" (*ibid.*, pp. 247; 250).

Fear and Trembling

Thus today, as in Newman's time, the reference to conscience as being supreme can very readily be misleading.

fact, in the usual dissent from *Humanae Vitae*, the appeal of conscience is made from a standpoint exactly opposite to that of its true meaning. As Newman pointed out, conscience is the means by which man becomes aware of his own sinfulness and unworthiness before his Creator, and through which he comes to know what God requires of him. From Newman's standpoint, conscience led a man to work for his salvation with fear and trembling. It did not mean that he was to allow his egotism and self-will, his lust and acquisitiveness, to become the ruling forces in his decisions, and then refer to the accumulated influence of these forces upon him as "the voice of conscience". But this latter view, is the one that is widespread today, and it accounts for the readiness with which the moral and doctrinal teaching of the Church is rejected whenever it interferes with what we wish to do. Yet if we adopt that view of conscience, there is no longer any room for the exercise of faith and its expression in self-sacrifice, which are so central to Newman's principles of spirituality.

Here is a representative passage which gives Newman's idea of conscience :

"... the more a person tries to obey his conscience, the more he gets alarmed at himself, for obeying it so imperfectly. His sense of duty will become more keen, and his perception of transgression more delicate, and he will understand more and more how many things he has to be forgiven. But next, while he thus grows in self-knowledge, he also understands more and more clearly that the voice of conscience has nothing gentle, nothing of mercy in its tone. It is severe, and even stern. It does not speak of forgiveness, but of punishment; it does not tell him how he may avoid it" (*Sermons Preached on Various Occasions*, pp. 66-67, also in *A Newman Synthesis*, p. 26.).

What God Commands

How far removed is this attitude from the glibness with which so many people today inform us, "My conscience tells me. . ." But let us suppose that we do have a real conflict in conscience within the individual who wishes to heed the voice of the Church, but who at the same time cannot see that there is anything wrong with contraceptive practices. How might such a conflict be resolved, so as to

protect the rights of conscience as Newman described them. I believe the answer to this dilemma is to be found in the passage from Newman's *The Development of Christian Doctrine*, written in his last year as an Anglican (1845), the writing of which led him to become a Catholic. In this volume Newman writes:

"Moreover, it must be borne in mind that, as the essence of all religion is authority and obedience, so the distinction between natural and revealed religion lies in this, that the one has a subjective authority, and the other an objective. Revelation consists in the manifestation of the Invisible Divine Power, or in the substitution of the voice of a Lawgiver for the voice of conscience. The supremacy of conscience is the essence of natural religion; the supremacy of the Apostle, or Pope, or Church, or Bishop, is the essence of revealed; and when such external authority is taken away, the mind falls back again of necessity upon that inward guide which is possessed even before Revelation was vouchsafed" (pp. 79-80).

Note that in either case what is involved is "authority and obedience", not freedom from authority so as to assert one's self-will. It is the purpose of both conscience and Revelation to make known to man what God commands of him. And, in Newman's view, Revelation is given in order to provide the conscience with a fuller understanding of what is required in order to please God and to carry out His will. To fall back upon conscience, therefore, and to insist upon its priority over Revelation is to reject this external help and information which God has given; and it is to show an attitude of mind and heart contrary to what a true conscience would lead a person to have. The reverence and submission to God which Newman identifies as the essence of conscience, is thankful for the objective Revelation, for this makes it easier to know what one must do in order to be saved. To turn away from the objective Revelation in order to prefer the subjective conscience is an act of self-will and not truly conscientious at all.

Ceasing to be Catholic

Consequently, if a Catholic finds some particular teaching of the Church, whether of doctrine or morality, unacceptable to his reason, or to what is today the more popular

riterion, his "experience", he has to ask himself a decisive question. That is, Is my reason or experience of greater value for forming my conscience than my belief that Christ founded the Catholic Church to teach in His name? If conscience is indeed the voice of God, then divine Revelation speaking through its chosen instrument of the Catholic Church cannot be ignored or set aside by any Catholic—unless he repudiates the proposition that the Catholic Church is divinely appointed to safeguard and explain both Revelation and the moral law. Thus, a dissident Catholic in fact choosing his conscience over the divine authority of the Catholic Church. He has a right to do this, but only at the expense of ceasing to be a Catholic. What his conclusion must be in this case is that the Catholic Church is not the voice of God, and that the nineteen and a half centuries of her existence have been a grand hoax perpetrated on gullible people.

Thus every dissident Catholic, whether of the left or the right, must be aware of the awful choice he is making, when it is a matter of a basic teaching in faith or morals which he is repudiating. Does the dissenting Catholic really believe that he is on the road to salvation by denying to the Catholic Church her divine authority, and by setting up his conscience as superior to her? Or has he lost all interest in salvation, and in a life beyond the present one, and is now only concerned with living in the world as easily and comfortably as he can?

Thus we can see that a true understanding of Newman's teaching on conscience, rather than providing us with a means for escaping from the doctrines and precepts of the Catholic Church, makes these press upon us with greater force and obligation than ever. Reading Newman correctly shows us the ever-present dangers of pride and egotism, and that we are resisting God Himself when we put aside the teaching of the Catholic Church as not suited to our times, not in agreement with our own particular ideas of what the Church should be teaching instead of what she is. Whatever the reason given, it is ultimately a choice between our own self-will and the Commandments of God.

Book Review

WHEN EAST WEDS WEST

The Marriage of East and West by Bede Griffiths
Collins; Fount Paperbacks.

Dom Bede Griffiths is a Benedictine monk who has spent the last quarter of a century in India, and during that time has made a close study of Hinduism, endeavoring to adapt the Benedictine way of life to the religious traditions of India.

I read this book with special interest because I believe the author has been invited to lecture in New Zealand in 1984 or 1985. It would be an understatement to say that I found it disappointing. For Dom Bede, the Judaic-Christian revelation is but one among the many that God has made in various parts of the world, and what we now need is a new religion, a synthesis of Christianity and Hinduism, that would be open to receive elements from Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism and the religions of primitive peoples.

In the 2nd century, the Gnostic heretics incorporated elements of the Christian faith, symbolically reinterpreted in their fanciful accounts of the other world. Now, centuries later, the wheel has come full circle, and Dom Bede is stating the case for a syncretistic religion in which events recorded in the New Testament, such as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of Christ, are treated as symbolic or beautiful myths—pictorial expressions of spiritual truths that will help men in their quest for the absolute self-consciousness that is the secret of the Gospel.

Is He a Catholic?

It is clear that, as a result of the author's involvement with Hinduism, he has been led to transcend all denominational limits, and so has ceased to be a Catholic. Thus, he tells us on page 42 that he has become a "Sannyasi", that is, one who renounces the world, not only the world in the Biblical sense of the world of sin, but the whole world of "signs" or appearances. And he adds that, as a "Sannyasi" he is called to go beyond all religion, beyond every human

titution, beyond every scripture and creed, to seek the imate reality that cannot be named.

It will be enough to mention some elements of Dom Bede's Christology to show that it falls well short of the teaching of the Church. Jesus, he says, is a Man, an exemplar, the pure instrument of the in-dwelling Spirit, a man being totally surrendered to the divine being. This is a Nestorian account of the Incarnation. Jesus would not be the Incarnate Son of God, but an avatar of the Godhead, like Rama or Krishna.

He was not concerned, Dom Bede argues, with the history of the Church as an institution, and therefore was not the source of such hierarchial structures as the Papacy and episcopate. He did not establish a priesthood or a sacrifice, and only gradually realised his calling as the Messiah.

Compatible

None of this is compatible with the teaching of the Magisterium, but Dom Bede would not find this disturbing, for he holds that creeds and formulas are all conditioned by historical circumstances and none of them can be considered as final or definitive.

Creation, he tells us, is the act by which God exists, and explains creation in terms that take us back to 2nd century Gnosticism, for creation is said to be conceived and brought into being through the union of the Son with the Spirit of His Bride. There is another echo of the 2nd century in the curious passage in which Dom Bede says that the serpent who seduced Eve becomes the Saviour, for there was a Gnostic sect called the Ophites who worshipped the serpent and brought a snake along to share in their Eucharistic banquets.

Hindu mysticism tends to be sensualistic, but this does not embarrass Dom Bede. He sees nothing incongruous in the worship of the lingam, or phallus, in the temples of India, and he has a good word for D. H. Lawrence's philosophy of "thinking with the blood" as being in harmony with the Hindu spirit. Like Lawrence, he attributes mystical value to sexual intercourse, regarding it as a means of participating in the life of the Spirit.

Disastrous

From time to time he ventures into the realm of philosophy, but with results that can only be described disastrous. In one place, echoing the German idealist Fichte, he tells us that there is no objective world opposed to the subjective world within. As G. K. Chesterton pointed out long ago, this would mean that a man's grandmother would be no more than a figment of his imagination.

In another place, we have the statement that mind and matter are interdependent and complementary aspects of one reality, which is the pantheistic philosophy of Spinoza in a nutshell. Elsewhere, we have the evolutionary pantheism of Teilhard de Chardin—the view that, since every particle of matter is endowed with some form of consciousness, life and consciousness were present in matter from the beginning and evolved with the evolution of the material universe.

Dom Bede's new religion bears a certain resemblance to that of Syng Moon, and it could be a forerunner of the coming world religion of which James Hitchcock has drawn an outline in his book, *Catholicism and Modernity*.

This new syncretistic religion will have no fixed dogmas or moral precepts, but it will provide a form of worship that will enable men and women to experience a warm glow of religiosity and a sense of fellowship as they associate with converts from all the world religions in what Teilhard called the "noosphere"—a "divine milieu" in which there is no place for difficult dogmas or awkward moral precepts.

With the establishment of this new religion, the Church which Christ is said to have built on St. Peter can be expected to fade quietly from the scene, for, like Christ Himself, it is only a "sign" which, when it has served its turn, will pass away.

—Fr. G. H. Duggan, S. J.